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## **Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal Re-formations of Relationships Across Two Generations of Mozambican Women**

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### **Abstract**

Scholars of Pentecostalism in Africa have repeatedly shown that this religion generally attracts younger generations who perceive the Pentecostal theology of liberation from the bonds of kinship, tradition, and elders as very powerful. This article contributes to the existing scholarly field by examining how different generations of working women and female students in Mozambique find the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal teachings and practices attractive, particularly when it comes to reshaping their relationships with kin, (ancestral) spirits, and men. It considers how Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism is helping both younger and older women to reorder their relationships. Drawing on the concept of heterotopia, the role of age is highlighted to demonstrate that Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism actively seeks to erase important generational hierarchies and differences, turning them into spiritual issues that affect all women regardless of age or generation.

### **Keywords**

Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism, Mozambique, generations, relationships, women

### **Introduction**

Much of the literature on the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa emphasizes its youthfulness (Adogame 2002; Lindhardt 2010; Maxwell 2002; Van Dijk 1992). Pentecostal conversion demands a break with the bonds of kinship and tradition, and presents an opportunity to transform one's life and reduce the influence of others through the power of the Holy Spirit (Meyer 1998). Van Dijk (1992) shows how this Pentecostal message empowers youth to define the traditional powerful role of elders as imbued with evil forces and no longer obey them (see also Maxwell 2002). Lindhardt (2010) analyzes how the born-again practice of young people allows them to reposition themselves within

family relationships. Pentecostal leaders also explicitly target youth through the use of modern styles of worship, dress, language, and teachings about relationships and sexuality (Bochow 2008; Frahm-Arp 2010; Van de Kamp 2012). In short, the Pentecostal movement offers the young an alternative religious space from which they can define their place in society in new ways. This attraction of Pentecostalism among youth has opened up a research field about the interplay between religious conversion and generational dynamics (e.g., Cole 2010; Gooren 2010; Lindhardt 2010; Van Dijk et al. 2011).

While conducting research on upwardly mobile urban women's engagement with Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique during 26 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2005 and 2011, it appeared that the new Pentecostal opportunities youngsters are taking and creating are also attractive to older persons. The Pentecostal women I met ranged in age from 15 to 75.<sup>1</sup> Some of the older women had converted at an earlier age, but many at a later stage in their lives. In several cases they followed the path of their Pentecostal daughters, who converted first and then brought their mothers to church (cf. Lindhardt 2010). The women of varying ages were all preoccupied with issues related to gender roles, marriage, sexuality, and family relations, but their particular positions, views, and questions on these matters differed. In general, these differences correlated with their age and the specific historical periods in which they grew up. Hence an analytical focus on the correlation between these women's religious activity and a certain stage in their lives is important (Gooren 2010).

Two generational settings are particularly relevant here: the Pentecostal women who were over 40 who had been educated after independence from Portugal in 1975 when the single-party Frelimo<sup>2</sup> regime adopted socialist policies; and younger Pentecostal women between 15 and 30 who had grown up in a postsocialist period marked by the transition to a neoliberal-oriented economy. Both generations of women shared their worries about the possible negative influence of spiritual forces on their relationships with men, but the ways in which they addressed and eventually experienced these spiritual influences diverged. The older generation had an ambivalent view of ancestral spirits before they converted to Pentecostalism, having been raised in an age when spirits were silenced and religion was generally considered backward (see further below). These women often attributed their failure to date or marry men to the ongoing connections of their kin with spirits,<sup>3</sup> and were trying to remove the influence of the spirits by participating in Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism. However, the younger Pentecostal women had mostly grown up with no clear notion of possible relations with ancestral spirits and learned about spiritual influences in their lives for the first time through the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal churches.

This article explores how working women and female students from these two different generations in the capital city Maputo are learning to view and relate to spirits in new ways by participating in Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism, and how Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal teachings and practices are helping them to reorder their relationships with men and kin. In line with the central theme of this special issue (Bochow and Van Dijk, introduction to this issue), the following explorations demonstrate how Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism is becoming a heterotopian or alternative space (Foucault 1986; Hetherington 1997) in Mozambican urban society when it comes to Pentecostal women's relationships with spirits, kin, and men. Scholars of African Pentecostalism have shown that many Pentecostal groups actively propagate a Christian identity that transcends the nation-state, creating new cultural ideas and practices (Marshall-Fratani 1998; Maxwell 2002; Van Dijk 1998, 2004). Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001) argue that the transnational character of contemporary religion is taking on a new significance compared to earlier missionary activities because the role of the nation-state has decreased, and the representation of a Pentecostal global community allows for an opening up of possibilities for people that goes beyond their local cultural context and provides other modes of identification and belonging. The Brazilian Pentecostal pastors in Mozambique continuously criticize what they consider to be Mozambican culture. They urge their followers to distance themselves from local forms of marriage and from kinship relations, and to engage in new modes of romance, marriage, and family life. In this contribution I highlight how this alternative position taken by Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism appears to reshape the generational issues women need to deal with. The prevailing generational hierarchy in discussing sexuality and marriage, and the different experiences of older and younger women in their relations are being erased in Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism and turned into similar spiritual and cultural problems that affect all women irrespective of their age. I argue that Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism conflates various generational traditions into one social space, just as Foucault describes how museums and libraries as heterotopian spaces enclose 'in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time' (1986, 26).

## **Two Generations of Urban Pentecostal Women**

Nearly 75% of the visitors and converts to Pentecostal churches in Maputo are women;<sup>4</sup> they are upwardly mobile, relatively well educated, and/or earning a salary. Normally the women have completed at least primary-school education and thus speak the official language Portuguese. Whereas they have

diverse ethnic backgrounds, they prefer to emphasize their transnational identity. Some are studying at universities and institutes of higher education. They all earn their own salary, although the amounts differ from the minimum wage to twenty times the minimum. With the implementation of neoliberal structural adjustment policies in Mozambique in the 1990s (Pitcher 2002), a growing number of women of all ages took the initiative to find new sources of income. Some have benefited from the economic and political reforms that have allowed them to access education and professional careers (Sheldon 2002; WLSAMOÇ 2001). Many of these women can be found in the Pentecostal churches.

The increase in women's roles as employed members of the workforce has progressively demonstrated their social power inside and outside the domain of the family. In her study of women in Maputo's Laulane neighborhood, Loforte describes the 'constant dichotomy' women find themselves in: on the one hand being a mother and spouse, and on the other a citizen and a member of the workforce (2003, 190). Attempts to minimize this dichotomy appear to be central in the experiences and narratives of Pentecostal women. However, the ways in which these women are concerned with the dichotomy differs according to their generation. For example, women of all ages did not generally contest the centrality of their identity as a wife and mother, but the younger generation (aged 15–30 years) wanted to give this identity a new meaning.

Using age and generation as an analytical perspective exhibits different trajectories of conversion over time, and how these change from one age cohort to another. The conversion stories show how women's biographies are shaped by social histories. The use of generation and age here is formed by three different but related perspectives. The first is historical. For example, as a consequence of the recent neoliberal economic reforms and in contrast to former generations of women living in the cities aged 50 and older (Loforte 2003; Penvenne 1997; Sheldon 2002), urban women are no longer as dependent on marriage for their economic survival, nor is having children vital to establishing their position and identity. These new circumstances are raising uncertainties and tensions among this growing group of upwardly mobile women and between different generations. This leads to the second perspective. The youngest generation (15–30 years) wants to be different from their mothers, but they do not always know how to achieve alternative forms of dating and marriage since they lack appropriate role models. At the same time, their mothers, who in some cases belong to the generation of 40 years and older, find the youngest generation disrespectful regarding advice from elders. In general, cultural norms of respect require younger individuals to listen to their

elders (Loforte 2003), a situation that the younger generation often views as problematic particularly because they find elders' views on relationships outdated. The third perspective shows that, within generations, women can have different opinions about the extent to which they should break with the opinions of the elders and with the generational stratification in their society. At times the younger female descendants try to avoid confronting their elders with their behaviour, while others are more outspoken regarding the old-fashioned views of their older kin. Their positions in these matters is influenced by their Pentecostal conversion.

### *The Generation of 40 to 55 Year Olds*

After independence in 1975, Frelimo's policies aimed at abandoning the old ways of life such as ancestral rituals, customary marriage, initiation rites, and church attendance (Arnfred 2011; Honwana 2002; Lundin 2007) and incorporating new ones. For example, it promoted the 'socialist family' as the basic cell of society. This family was composed of a monogamous, nuclear family as compared to the polygamous and extended African family (Arnfred 2001). Most of the Pentecostal women aged 40–55 that I met came from families who were members of Frelimo; after independence many of their fathers worked for the new government. They actively engaged in the socialist project of modernizing society (cf. Sumich 2008). These women told me about the freedom they had experienced after independence to live like the former Portuguese colonists, and stressed the new possibilities for breaking with certain cultural expectations and patterns in the framework of Frelimo's socialist project.

Dona Silmara,<sup>5</sup> aged 55 when I first met her in 2005, grew up in Maputo city where her relatives worked for the Frelimo government after independence. She received some schooling and got married in 'the European way' just after independence, i.e., she got married without performing the local marriage tradition or *lobolo*.<sup>6</sup> Her friend, Dona Isabel (aged 51), recalled how she even got married without giving advance notice to her family! Even today this is almost unbelievable in a context where kin continue to play a central role in marriage arrangements. Dona Silmara and Dona Isabel immediately added that they were deceived by the new type of marriage. Both of their marriages ended in divorce and, like many other women, they were the victims of 'urban polygamy' (Arnfred 2001, 37–39) and domestic violence. The sudden changes that Frelimo's policies wanted to introduce were not accompanied by an organized period of transition regarding family issues, and older forms of education about family life like initiation rites were not replaced with new ones

(Osório and Arthur 2002). No new forms of sexual and marital education were introduced, and parents were not accustomed to discussing such (shameful) matters with their children. Frelimo thus tried to erode the generational power of the elders by abandoning their important role in transmitting cultural knowledge, but succeeded only partially. In short, new structures could not be forced onto people or were not even developed, and older ones were (partially and secretly) continued (Lundin 2007). This created feelings of uncertainty about gender roles, marriage, and family life that resulted in a constant struggle concerning behaviour and responsibilities within and between different generations (Cipriano 2010).

Moreover, the women pointed out the incapability of the former mission churches that they frequented in addressing their problems. When they were confronted with domestic violence, their pastors or priests had no solution or ignored them. Of particular concern was these church leaders' negation of the influence of ancestral spirits and witchcraft practices. The frictions in Dona Silmara's household were intensified by strange happenings. For example, the lights would suddenly switch on in the middle of the night, and nobody could sleep. The family felt a negative influence impinging on their lives and Dona Silmara suspected that spiritual agents were involved. Members of her Presbyterian church (the former Swiss Mission) said that the problems would pass, but they did not. A friend told her that the pastors at the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal churches who had recently arrived (early 1990s) knew how to deal with spiritual agents. Finally, after a fire broke out in her house, she decided to visit a Pentecostal church and remained there.

Both Catholic and Protestant missions have been operating in Mozambique since the colonial period. Various Frelimo leaders were educated by the Protestant missions (Cruz e Silva 2001) as were the parents of many Pentecostal women. Arnfred (2011) notes the partial overlap between Frelimo and Protestant morals in the propagation of the nuclear family and the fight against polygamy, *lobolo*, and ancestor veneration. The parents of the Pentecostal women 'did away with the customs they grew up with', as one Pentecostal woman put it,<sup>7</sup> mentioning the rituals dedicated to the ancestors in particular. Yet the women explained that kin retained their traditions, which had an impact on these women's lives and became a growing fear in the postsocialist era when full religious freedom was introduced. Directly after independence the Frelimo government adopted an antireligious stance, including the persecution of traditional healers (Lundin 2007; Pinsky 1982). However, the collapsing economy and Frelimo's growing dependence on civil society for the distribution of food, clothes, schooling, and health facilities changed political attitudes. In the early 1980s a new period of more constructive dialogue

between Frelimo and religious leaders emerged (Morier-Genoud 1996; Van Koevering 1992), and full religious freedom was introduced with the democratic constitution of 1990. The new democratic government instigated a strategy of readopting presocialist cultural elements, including traditional healing and ancestor rituals (Honwana 2002; West 2005). Yet in the Pentecostal women's view the government's reintroduction of 'traditional culture' is exactly the reason why the neoliberal and democratic projects have been increasing their problems with men and kin since 'evil spirits' are again moving freely and harming their relationships.

### *The Generation of 15 to 30 Year Olds*

While the older generation is often uncertain about its position in the new socioeconomic and cultural order, the youngest generation of highly educated converts is much more self-assured and confident. They grew up in the post-socialist, neoliberal era and have benefited from various educational options due to the growing numbers of institutions of higher education, and access to Internet facilities, books, and foreign television channels that broadcast the famous Brazilian *telenovelas*. These broadened their perspectives on how society could be organized and on family life and marriage, and they became familiar with ideas of personal choice and responsibility. These women have been disconnected from aspects of local culture to a certain extent because they could not communicate with their elders and receive their knowledge. Portuguese, the official language, was their mother tongue; in some cases they could not even talk to their grandparents who only spoke a local language, and they did not participate in special family rituals. Due to the new openness toward Mozambique's cultural and spiritual past, the younger generation was able to gain more knowledge of customs and ideas with which they were unacquainted as these subjects began to be discussed more openly. Interestingly, this search for knowledge brought some of them to Pentecostal churches where cultural traditions were explained, and where even though pastors approached 'tradition' critically they connected with the youngsters' wish for more openness on issues concerning spirits and traditional customs.

The young women moved between choosing a confrontational position toward traditional practices and their elders on the one hand, and on the other hand learning more about their cultural past without losing their relatively independent position in society. At the same time, this generation of educated women was afraid of the possible spiritual influences their elders could exercise on their lives. They were confused about elderly kin who informed them that something that had happened long ago had an effect on their current



difficulties with men. For the first time they were hearing that certain incidents with spirits in the family's past could be behind their failure to date or marry. To discover the influence of the past in the present, they had to participate with their kin in sessions with local healers, but often these healing sessions did not help them and they misunderstood what happened during the ritual. Patricia, a 29-year-old, noted that the *curandeiro* (healer) started to put something on her feet, and when she asked what it was her family told her she should not ask questions. *Curandeiros* commented that sometimes they are incapable of helping their urban clients because they are unaware of their past and do not want to cooperate with the spirits.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to families and local healers, Pentecostal pastors openly explained what the practices in their family meant according to the Pentecostal view in a way that connected with these women's knowledge and aspirations.

In addition to their mediating role between their descendants and their ancestors, elders also tried to continue to exercise their role in marriage arrangements. Traditionally, sexuality and marriage were regarded as part of the transition from childhood to adulthood, and elders played a central role in this process (Loforte 2003). The transition was always carefully guarded through initiation rites organized by kin and/or respected elders. As part of the increasing independence of young people from kin due to education and jobs, they now want to control sexuality and marriage themselves, without interference from kin.<sup>9</sup> Manuel (2008) describes how young people today define adulthood as independence from their parents, expressed through control of their own sexual encounters and thus of their bodies. Yet while couples view themselves as adults and that they are responsible for their own deeds, this is not always an opinion shared by their older kin, who may intervene in a relationship and any marriage arrangements. This results in conflict because interventions by parents or kin come too late or make little sense to the couple (Paulo 2005). In these situations of conflict or doubt about how to behave with regard to sexuality and marriage, many women have started to attend Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal church services in order to find a faithful husband and learn how to build a successful marriage and family.

### **The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal View of Relationships and Spirits**

Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal churches have been present in Mozambique since the beginning of the 1990s (Cruz e Silva 2003; Freston 2005; van de Kamp 2011a), namely at the end of the socialist era and the beginning of the liberalization of the socioeconomic, political, and religious domains. The Brazilian

churches can be placed in what has been referred to as a global ‘third wave’ of Pentecostalism or neo-Pentecostalism that started in the 1970s that, despite encompassing a large variety of Pentecostals, can be identified by its strong focus on the theology of prosperity and spiritual war (Anderson 2004; Freston 1995).<sup>10</sup> Pentecostals stress that the world is a place of spiritual warfare between God and Satan, which has powerful consequences for everyday life. Against this backdrop, Pentecostals in Africa are concerned with the influence of ancestral spirits and local cultural traditions, which they consider to be satanic and need to be fought by the Holy Spirit (Meyer 1998; van Dijk 1998). The theology of prosperity emphasizes how a combative faith allows people to change their lives and create happiness, health and prosperity for themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Coleman 2000; Martin 2002).

According to Brazilian Pentecostal pastors, all women, irrespective of their age, can only create new relationships with men if they distance themselves from ‘African culture’ and ‘evil spirits’. In their approach to spirits and African culture they often refer to Afro-Brazilian possession cults in Brazil. In the pastors’ view, when the transatlantic slave trade transported African slaves to Brazil evil spirits from Africa also crossed the Atlantic and came to figure in the Afro-Brazilian cults. In Brazil Pentecostals are known for their crusade against Afro-Brazilian religions (Almeida 2009) and Brazilian missionaries are now recrossing the Atlantic to combat the supposed roots of this evil. The shared Pentecostal transatlantic history of African spirits is the medium for discovering and reflecting on the dark powers at work in Africa today (Freston 2005). From this Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal position, the pastors want to make Mozambicans aware of the devilish relations in which they are entangled and should dissociate from by participating in the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal space of services, courses, and prayers. If women can break with devilish influences they will be able to establish a healthy nuclear family and a relationship with their partner based on mutual trust.

The pastors claim that Mozambican women have to deal with the same devilish powers that are active everywhere in the world. Many pastors and converts in Mozambique stated that ‘the Devil makes people believe that they are dealing with a specific ancestral spirit, but it is a demon’. In the same vein, the pastors are not interested in the specific histories of spirits; they also disregard the diversity of ethnic groups and cultural customs in the country as they simply considered them as devilish. Whatever particular ancestral spirit may attack converts, whatever government policy influences women’s lives, whatever education they pursue, in the end they are involved in a spiritual war and should fight any devilish forces. Similarly, Pentecostal women always use terms like ‘culture’, ‘spirits’, and ‘tradition’ without further specification, both

because they often have little knowledge about specific spirits and cultural traditions, and because they adopt Pentecostal discourse about local realities.

The Brazilian leaders are also not concerned about the specific issues of marriage and sexuality that different generations of women have to deal with. The problematic effects of the 'socialist family' model on the lives of the 40–55 generation as well as the younger generation's struggle for independence in matters of sexuality are all approached as part of the same cultural and spiritual war. This means that young and old participate in the same services and counseling sessions about marriage, and are approached equally. The pastors aim to teach Mozambican women to be open about sexuality and relationships by speaking about these subjects and by showing affection (van de Kamp 2012). Pastors call couples aged 20 and 50 forward and interview them about how they met. The pastors then comment and give examples from their own lives in Brazil. One pastor noted that Mozambican men are very shy: 'You have to step up to a woman when you like her. Make contact and talk to each other'.<sup>11</sup> Calling his wife forward, he told the audience how he went to see her parents when he wanted to marry. His wife's father asked him what he could offer his daughter. His response was: 'Everything she needs'. The message was to not give up; you can and will be fortunate. The pastor embraced his wife and discussed the importance of showing affection, for example by holding your partner's hand when walking down the street. Then the couples of all ages standing on the platform were asked to embrace and kiss each other to show and confirm their love.

The Brazilian pastor did not take into consideration the fact that he was operating in a society where affection is generally expressed in more hidden ways, particularly in an intergenerational setting, and where there are different opinions between the older and younger generations about courtship and love. Although in local custom in southern Mozambique the man's kin generally visit the woman's kin to arrange a marriage, the pastor stated that the man himself should go see the woman's parents. The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal messages and practices therefore contrast in many ways with what women were used to. They might feel embarrassed to kiss and speak in the presence of older or younger women, but at the same time it could help them assess their situation from a new angle. The women in their fifties commented that they were too old for 'these things of love', but after the insistence of the pastor that they could embrace a man who would really love them some began a new relationship. The young converts started taking their mothers to the special sessions about love in church to make them understand their hesitancy regarding a customary marriage and where their new visions on love and marriage were coming from.

### **Pentecostal Women's Appropriation of the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal Alternative**

In the following I examine how upwardly mobile women of the two generations engage with Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal views, and how they try to develop new forms of relating and marriage. While I present different individual cases, they all address issues that correspond with the lives of many other upwardly mobile Pentecostal women of the same generation.

#### *Women Above 40*

When I met Julia for the first time in September 2005 she was aged 40, had bought her own house, and was working in one of the government ministries. In the evenings she was studying at an institute of higher education. But Julia was having difficulty finding a trustworthy man, even though various men wanted to date her. She explained, 'Various men pay the rent for different houses where their various wives or lovers live. I have my own house. Some men want to rent me a house and want me to wait for them. But why should I make myself dependent on them?' Julia was single, had been divorced for some years, and had a daughter from a previous relationship. She felt that one of the principal causes of her problems with men was the influence of destructive spiritual powers in her family that affected her and her sisters, who had also been unsuccessful in marriage. She told me about her last partner with whom she had lived for several years. During that period she had had a dream about having sexual intercourse with a woman. Looking back, she recalled that since she was not converted at that time she had failed to recognize the dream's spiritual dimensions. 'At the time I had no idea that the woman [the new wife of her ex-partner] was asking to possess my man. Such a dream means that your relationship is over', Julia said. She explained that she was not protected from any harm of spirits with evil intentions because her parents had established a nuclear family free from any bondage to ancestral spirits while other kin, such as her aunts and uncles, continued to practice ancestral rituals. Julia stated that her kin sent evil to them because her nuclear family did not respect their ancestral elders, and she and her sisters were spiritually unprotected. Therefore she wanted to leave the country: 'I want to live elsewhere where you are less liable to be affected by these family spirits'.<sup>12</sup> Julia began frequenting the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal Universal Church to be liberated from evil spiritual influences.

Julia emphasized that her dream showed her bondage to an evil spirit, who she also named her spiritual spouse. Other Pentecostal women told me that their connection with a spirit frustrated their relationships with men. The

local healers I visited to learn more about spiritual spouses referred to two types of spirits who in the Ronga and Changana languages of south Mozambique are called *xikwembu xamathlari* (spirit of a person killed in a violent way) and *xikwembu muhliwa* (spirit of a person killed or stolen through witchcraft) (cf. Honwana 2002).<sup>13</sup> The *curandeiros* explained that these restless spirits, from people who were killed in a war or through witchcraft and were not properly buried, seek revenge by attacking the family of the murderer and are only calmed by receiving a gift such as a young virgin woman who marries the spirit, giving the spirit a family where he can find rest.<sup>14</sup> Women often experience sexual intercourse with this spirit physically or in dreams. Pentecostals view the spirit as a demon, and Brazilian Pentecostal pastors explain who the spirit is by referring to ‘devilish’ Afro-Brazilian spiritual entities from Brazil.

Whereas the *curandeiros* stressed that it is not necessary to suffer from the spirit spouse and that after following the correct procedures women are able to also marry a man of flesh and blood, Julia felt she was too detached from her kin and her ancestral history to follow that path, and preferred to follow the Pentecostal way of making a final break with this history and with the spirit. Julia observed that in contrast to her parents, she had found a way to make a real break from the influence of ancestral spiritual and generational powers. Even though she was still considering a move to a new country, for the time being she had found an alternative and ‘foreign’ place in the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal realm. She learned to close off her body to evil forces and intentions by participating in Pentecostal services every day, being filled with the Holy Spirit and following the pastors’ teachings. She invested in becoming as independent from her family as possible by refusing to share her salary with her kin and not consulting them about her dream.

Julia also started attending special services on love and marriage in order to be able to establish a more sustainable relationship with a man. Like other women of her generation, she found the pastors’ teachings on marital relations especially instructive with regard to personal development. Even though the pastors underscored the woman’s caring role in the family as well as her obedience to her husband, they also stressed women’s individual success at home as well as in public life as crucial elements of their conversion. Even if men and women have different positions, they are spiritually equal (cf. Soothill 2007). Since women are perceived as being more open to the spiritual world than men, they can gain more power because of the spiritual influence they are able to exercise over men and thus play an important role in men’s conversion. Julia emphasized that these teachings strengthened her views that men should take her seriously and not demand that she give up her own house, or be their second partner since many of the men her age that she met were married.

She still sometimes felt vulnerable because of the influence her kin exercised over her. Since she had stopped sharing her salary, the tension with her relatives had escalated because they partly depended on Julia's income. Julia also felt that men were less interested in her because she looked ill and 'they see that I am having problems'. In the end, Julia could not endure the increasing tensions at home and her single status. When a pastor became angry with her she left the Universal Church. However, spirits started to follow her again in her dreams and she returned to the church because she sensed a need for the power of the Holy Spirit. She stressed that she now tried to keep a certain distance from her relatives, from her new partner and also from the pastors, by no longer following everything they said. She commented that she had finally developed sufficient self-confidence. She saw her new relationship with a European man she had met on a dating site as proof of a promising converted life.

Dona Silmara and Dona Isabel described how they developed an alternative lifestyle and life perspective after converting. The fact that they had not lived up to the ideal of the 'socialist family' had affected their self-esteem. Dona Isabel started drinking with her friend Dona Maria (aged 49), and they became alcoholics. When the Brazilian Universal Church arrived in Maputo friends invited them to go to services and they converted. Dona Maria described her story:<sup>15</sup>

My life became structured again. I stopped smoking and drinking, I studied, I had a purpose in life again, I came to understand what the Bible was saying and who Jesus was. I learned that there is evil in life, the Devil tries everything. Do you see how many women we have in church? Many marriages don't work. The Devil is destroying our families. Therefore the church has family services, the family is important to the church and we have to work against the influence of evil in families. . . . Now I understand why my husband and I had problems: the Devil had entered our life. But it's only now that I know how to prevent the Devil's influence.

Dona Maria was eager to participate in the Pentecostal counseling session on love together with the younger converts. As she herself commented, she was becoming young again. Her parents divorced when she was a child and she had moved several times, thus she had never attended school regularly. Her father sent her to work in a factory in Maputo at the end of the colonial era, which she considered a waste of time since she could have been studying. But now she was studying and succeeded in being selected for a Masters programme in Brazil. She dreamed of a romantic relationship and enthusiastically participated in conversations with young Pentecostal women to learn from their dating experiences.

*Women Between 15 and 30*

Elena, a 25-year old student, was doubtful about the existence of ancestral spirits and was critical of her mother and aunts who claimed that spiritual relationships would influence her relationships with men. But when she started attending special Pentecostal meetings where sexuality, courtship, and marriage were discussed she learned that spirits could influence her life but that these were demonic. She frequented the Pentecostal sessions about love because ‘topics related to courtship are taboo’ and not a subject of conversation at her home. Elena found a boyfriend within the church but observed ‘in everything we were each other’s opposite’.<sup>16</sup> Her mother, in this case acting as an elder, disapproved of their relationship, but Elena stated, ‘We had faith. In church they stress that it is necessary to have faith. With faith everything would be all right’. She was strong and self-assured and had opinions on everything, but this was not the case with her partner. She started dominating him and they quarreled frequently. ‘Then I realized we should not go on. It is not only faith; you have to use your brains as well.’ Elena explained that she had exaggerated the Pentecostal break with her elderly kin because of her enthusiasm for the Pentecostal emphasis on self-responsibility. She used the term ‘irresponsibility’ to point out that embodying an alternative Pentecostal position could lead to ‘foolish behaviour’. As converts learned to close their bodies as well as their minds to the opinions and actions of kin, spirits, and persons they were related to, they eventually became too uncaring toward others and themselves. While Elena wanted to make an independent decision about her relationship, she learned that her mother had rightly foreseen that her relationship would break down. As a result, Elena aimed to develop a balance between acting independently and listening to her elders, especially regarding her relationships with men. She decided that she first wanted to be sure how much a new boyfriend supported her ambitions and career, and would listen to her parents’ advice before finally making her own decision on any future marriage.

Marta, a 22-year-old university student, was Catholic but has frequented Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal churches since she was seventeen. She recounted, ‘I learned that when you have faith, you are really able to achieve something in your life. Often we think negatively, we think of our problems. But we should think positively’.<sup>17</sup> She and her boyfriend were going to marry, but the *lobolo* presented a dilemma because the ancestral spirits would be consulted during the ritual. Her future husband was also Pentecostal, and together they succeeded in negotiating with their families to organize a ‘Christian *lobolo*’ with the presence of a pastor who would secure a Christian marriage free of any spiritual bondage. Her mother became so impressed by Marta’s dedication to

achieving her dreams and by the Pentecostal pastor who preached at the wedding that she started frequenting the same church as Marta, and also initiated a university study.

In summary, through their participation in Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism women of all ages have come to realize that, more than generational divides, spiritual powers are affecting their relationships with men. Yet the implications are different for the two generations described here. The generation of 40 to 55 year olds has experienced the spiritual power of elders concerning sexuality and marriage. Their engagement with Pentecostalism has given them the power to contest the generational hierarchy, freeing themselves from spiritual constraints and dominant gender categories in their search for a reliable partner. Instead of surrendering to the wishes of kin and men, they have started to follow their own dreams and to demand faithfulness from their men. The younger generation, who did not grow up with spirits and is curious about the cultural past, has reconnected with the guardians of cultural customs but in a Pentecostal way. They have listened to the elders while keeping a critical distance. Elena thus felt she could now make a more balanced choice of a partner, and Marta felt she had respected the elders' wishes with a *lobolo*, but on her own terms. However, women from both generations have faced the danger that their Pentecostal position could become too alternative and too far removed from the reality of their society and relationships, and were discovering just how far they wanted to take the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal alternative.

## Conclusion

What I have attempted to demonstrate in this paper is that the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal movement not only offers the young but also older persons an alternative religious space from which they can define their place in society in new ways. Mozambican women of all ages have come to realize that, more than generational divides, spiritual powers are affecting their relationships with men. Yet for the two generations described here, the implications are different. The older women have distanced themselves from the demonic influences their extended families exercised on their relationships. They have been developing new modes of relating to men by investing in romance and in their individual success at home as well as in public life. The younger women, who doubted the existence of (ancestral) spirits, have realized that spiritual forces were intervening in their courtship and marriages and have become more cautious in their choices of a partner and marriage rituals. Women from both generations have learned to engage more critically with Pentecostalism when



their breaks with sociocultural conventions ended in a broken relationship or a situation of social isolation, and are creating a greater balance between self-responsibility and dependence on kin and partners to prevent alienation from potentially desirable partners. They have thus become more conscious of how far they want to take the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal alternative.

Studying alternative Pentecostal social spaces through the prism of age demonstrates how different generational forms of urban female religiosity and relationships and marriage are transformed together. Women's generational engagements with Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism are producing new modes of relating; at the same time, these alternatives are shaping women's evolving and changing religiosity. The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal space that produces a critical awareness of practices like *lobolo* and connections with ancestral spirits is being appropriated by upwardly mobile women of varying ages to open up new cultural domains. They develop novel views on love, relationships and marriage, and they create alternative ritual practices. For Pentecostal women, reshaping their relations with (spiritual) kin and men is their way of positioning themselves in regard to generational hierarchies and expectations in new ways.

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## Notes

1. The majority of the women in the Pentecostal churches were under 50 years of age.

2. The Liberation Front of Mozambique (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*) was founded in 1962 to fight for independence from Portugal. Since independence, Frelimo ruled first as a single party and later as the majority party in a multiparty parliament.

3. Pentecostal women normally did not distinguish between regional, ancestral, and foreign spirits, but used the general word 'spirits'. This was reinforced by the Pentecostal discourse that all spirits, except for the Holy Spirit, are devilish (see further the section The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal View of Relationships and Spirits).

4. This figure is based on my own findings. For percentages in other regions of Mozambique see Igreja and Dias-Lambranca (2009); Pfeiffer et al. (2007) and Schuetze (2010). The results of the 2007 census show the growing importance of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the country (INE 2010).

5. 'Dona' means Madam in Portuguese. All names in the text have been changed.

6. *lobolo* is often translated as bride-price but is actually an exchange between the family of the future bride and bridegroom (see, e.g., Arnfred 2001). For changing conceptions and practices of *lobolo* see Granjo (2005).

7. Interview 21 November 2006.

8. Interviews with different *curandeiros* in which these issues came up were held on 15 November 2006; 5 December 2006, and 8, 27, and 28 February 2007.

9. This is a process that began in the colonial era when young men started to earn their own money in the mines of South Africa; this enabled them to arrange a marriage on their own (Harries 1994).

10. The most significant Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal churches in Mozambique are the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, known as the Universal Church); the *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus* (the World Church of the Power of God); and the *Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor* (the Pentecostal Church God is Love, known as God is Love), which was one of the first churches that developed neo-Pentecostal features in Brazil (Chesnutt 1997).

11. Universal Church 26 July 2008.

12. Conversation 3 February 2007.

13. For similar spirits in central Mozambique see Igreja et al. (2008); Marlin (2001); and Schuetze (2010). I have written more about the spirit spouse and Pentecostal women in van de Kamp 2011b.

14. Julia spoke about a female spirit, but most spirit spouses appear to be male. For a discussion see Honwana (2002).

15. Interview 13 June 2006.

16. Interview 28 June 2006.

17. Conversation 25 February 2005.